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Endogenous Livestock Development — Can it Help the Poor?

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Abstract

The consumption of meat and milk in developing countries is rapidly rising and expected to double in the next two decades. The enhanced demand and the liberalisation of trade have started triggering the expansion of industrial livestock production in the South, promising to revolutionise and intensify the livestock sector in many developing countries. What options have poor herders and farmers if they want to continue livestock keeping in this changing context? Some development professionals recommend vertical integration and contract farming as solutions. But these strategies appear inappropriate instruments for pro-poor development as they commonly combine high labour productivity with low employment. A study conducted by the Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative of the FAO suggests that the best way of supporting poor livestock keepers is by helping them build strong associations and empower them to argue for their rights. Pointing in the same direction, another study sees it as crucial to reform the institutional context of service delivery. “People-centred livestock development” (PCLD) is an approach to livestock development that puts the livestock keeper into the centre of development efforts rather than just pursuing enhanced animal production levels. It recognises the fact that pastoralist and smallholder livestock production systems are geared towards risk-aversion instead of maximising production per animal, and therefore seeks to primarily support the resilience of livestock keeping households, for instance by securing access to land and grazing rights. Recognition and respect of indigenous knowledge and local culture are important aspects of PCLD projects, as are the integration of local and modern knowledge, initiating a dialogue with politicians and scientists, linking people to support institutions and helping them explore niche markets and voice their needs. Other potential strategies are lobbying for the legalisation of informal markets, lowering animal mortality in low-input husbandry systems, and helping people to fulfil the required standards of hygiene and (zoonotic) disease control. The paper analyses such approaches and discusses their results and impacts, drawing on a pilot study of 15+ people-centred livestock projects, additional project documents and literature and field experience in several Asian countries.

Keywords: Livestock development, participatory approaches, pastoralists, people-centred livestock development, smallholder livestock keepers, sustainable development